Customs Modernization

September 2002 Status Update for Oversight Agencies

CMO Solidifies Program Management Effort

Consistent with the continuing maturity of the modernization program and the recommendations of the General Accounting Office (GAO) in its May 2002 report, the Customs Modernization Office (CMO) has:

- Developed a human capital management plan;
- Institutionalized the processes governing the ACE project; and
- Completed enterprise architecture certification.

Already recognized for establishing a solid program management base, the CMO continues to enhance key Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) project elements to help ensure program success.

Human Capital Management

As the modernization program progressed, Customs recognized that staffing for the CMO effort would have to be increased. The CMO organizational structure was redefined and a plan was developed to expand the office. The CMO more than doubled the number of government positions from 11 to 27 with only six vacancies remaining.

A strategic human capital management plan has been developed to tie the CMO's human capital policies, processes, and practices to its strategic goals. The plan addresses all aspects of human capital planning. It explains how the human capital function is expected to add value to the modernization program. The plan includes a job analysis and design; employee recruitment, selection, and retention; performance management; and training Customs employees on the needs assessed for their position description. The CMO is on target to finalize an approved Strategic Human Capital Management Plan for September 30.

Institutionalization and Internal Assessment of Key Process Areas

Successful organizations have found that standardizing processes and procedures are fundamental to managing large programs. When standardized processes and procedures are put into place, repeatability is created, which improves the overall reliability of the organization. The CMO is using Carnegie Mellon's Software Engineering Institute Software Acquisition Capability Maturity Model (SEI SA-CMM) to standardize its

software acquisition processes and procedures.* The plan includes process improvement and provisions for training. Customs is on pace to report to Congress on the results of an internal assessment of the CMO's maturity against the SEI SA-CMM Level 2 key process areas.

There are already more than 100 plans, processes, and procedures governing the CMO program. As processes are completed, they are immediately released to the

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organization for use in an institutionalization effort. To institutionalize these processes to the 90 percent level, employees need to be trained on them. Training is being timed to support key cycles in the program including the budget cycle, contracting, and other key activities. A needs assessment has been conducted to determine what overview or skills level training should be provided to identified stakeholders. The Human Capital Management Plan outlines training strategies for the Modernization Program.

The CMO anticipates that the process development activities will culminate in an internal self-assessment that will be completed by September 2002.

Enterprise Architecture Certification

ACE is being built in four major blocks of work or "increments." Each increment will offer new capabilities that are built upon previous ACE capabilities. The first deployment of the ACE architecture will focus on the technical infrastructure and will be a foundation for following increments.

Enterprise architecture offers a blueprint of how the organization should operate in the future and how it will transition from its present to its future state. It describes the organization's operational perspectives in logical terms, such as business processes, and technical terms, such as infrastructure. When organizations fail to use enterprise architecture for building major IT systems, the resulting systems run the risk of being characterized as interoperable, inefficient, redundant, inconsistent, and incompatible.

The GAO recommended that before building each release of ACE, the enterprise architecture be sufficiently extended to reflect any necessary business updates. Customs supported GAO's recommendation to update and extend the existing enterprise architecture to guide and constrain large system development or acquisition projects such as ACE. Customs Commissioner notified the House and Senate appropriation subcommittees on July 16, 2002 that the certification is complete. Customs has

established an incrementally enhanced enterprise architecture and conducted a System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) preliminary design review prior to beginning detailed design and development. This review demonstrated that Customs has the necessary architecture framework needed to proceed with the first increment and release of ACE.

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Homeland Security Update

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recently gave direction that involves a review of agency spending to identify and eliminate redundant spending and streamline bureaucracy. The objective is to understand opportunities for saving through a review of IT investments of the proposed Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies. Customs executives are taking a proactive approach to address OMB's concerns and ensure that Customs Modernization continues to be a priority in the future DHS. Assistant Commissioner for Office of Information Technology, Mr. S. W. Hall, Jr., is actively involved as a member of the Homeland Security IT Investment Review Group. This group's mission is to identify redundant technology investments that need to be integrated to enhance operations. The group will make recommendations to the OMB and the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) for reducing and avoiding costs and tracking resulting savings. Mr. Charles R. Armstrong, Executive Director, Customs Modernization Office, is a co-chair of the Border Security and Interagency Action Team, that is working to develop an enterprise architecture for the future DHS.

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*See the June 2002 issue for a detailed article on SA-CMM.

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